

DoD Plans Commemoration of Korean War 50th Anniversary

The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year (FY) 1998, Section 1083, provided for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Korean War to be observed from June 25, 2000 through November 11, 2003. The commemoration was initiated by a Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum for the Service Secretaries, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Directors of Defense Agencies, dated December 3, 1996. The FY98 Authorization Act is the Congressional authorization for the Secretary of Defense to conduct the commemorative program. The Memorandum Designates the Secretary of the Army as the DoD Executive Agent to plan and conduct commemorative activities.

The year 2000 marks the 50th anniversary of the start of the Korean War - a war in which over 1.5 million Americans fought and almost 37,000 gave their lives. This anniversary provides our nation with the opportunity to commemorate the war and to thank and honor Veterans who fought that war and the families that supported them. To facilitate this, the Department of Defense, in coordination with other federal departments and agencies, veterans and educational organizations, private businesses and corporations, and communities throughout America will con-

duct and support events which commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Korean War. The commemorative period and events will closely mirror the actual dates and events of the war, which began when North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel and invaded the Republic of Korea on June 25, 1950, and ended by armistice on July 27, 1953. The official commemorative period will commence on June 25, 2000, and continue through Veterans Day, November 11, 2003.

The primary purpose of the commemoration is to thank and honor those Americans, living and dead, who fought in the Korean War. In addition, the commemoration will recognize and remember prisoners of war (POWs) and those missing in action (MIA) from the war. The significant contributions of women will also be highlighted, as well as those of minority groups. The focus of the three-year series of events and activities is to educate and inform the public of the Veterans' contributions and sacrifices and to thank the families of all those who served.

In addition, other purposes of the commemoration include remembering and honoring the contributions and sacrifices made by Allies of the United States, and their Veterans. The events will recognize the role of the United Nations in opposing and countering armed aggression and restoring international order. The commemoration will not only spotlight Veterans who served at the front, but will pay tribute to the accomplishments and contributions of Americans who served on the home front, and elsewhere, in support of the Korean War effort.

The further intent is to highlight the role of the armed forces of the United States, then and now, in maintaining world peace through strength. Another theme being explored will



be advances made in technology, science and medicine related to military research conducted during the Korean War.

The Secretary of the Army has been named Executive Agent for the events commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War. As such the Secretary has been given the authority to task with authority to task the services and to enlist the involvement of CINC assigned forces. These activities will be coordinated with the Director, Joint Staff. U.S. commemorative activities in Korea, including U.S. participation in allied events, will be planned and conducted by the Commander, U.S. Forces, Korea, who will serve as the on-site DoD operating agent.

The Executive Agent has established an International Commemorations Committee within the office of the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army for International Affairs to plan, organize and coordinate the commemoration. The Secretaries of the Military Departments, as well as the heads of Federal Departments and Agencies have been directed to establish or designate project offices to plan and coordinate Korean War events and programs within their respective organizations. The project office will also coordinate with the International Commemorations Committee. As far as is practically possible, given current missions and responsibilities, the intent is for all ships, camps, posts, stations, agencies and activities within DoD to be encouraged to actively plan, conduct and support events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Korean War. This will include involvement, as tasked and directed by the Executive agent, in national commemorative activities, as well as Service and

unit level activities, programs and projects.

Foremost among suggested commemorative activities at the unit and community level is the Commemorative Community Program administered by the International Committee. Participating organizations will conduct three commemorative activities a year throughout the commemorative period and receive formal recognition by the Secretary of Defense. Qualifying activities may be as

simple as adding a Korean War theme to an existing activity (e.g., parade or Memorial day observance), establishing a commemorative display or exhibit or hosting a speaker or a Korean War Veteran. More involved examples could include conducting a symposium or battle study. DoD spokespersons indicate there is no set formula, and that creativity is the watchword.

The International Commemorations Committee will be producing educational and commemorative products including posters, teachers' guides, children's books, fact sheets, pins, bookmarks and calendars. The committee also is distributing service-produced historical monographs and a CD-ROM containing the official Korean War histories of the three sea services. All of these materials will be available to participating DoD and government activities, as well as to commemorative communities and schools.

Almost 50 years ago, as the people of the United States turned toward building a prosperous peace in the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. was again called upon to help combat unprovoked

aggression. The U.S., joined by 21 allies, committed its resources to fighting under extreme and difficult conditions, in order to ensure the freedom of a people not known to most Americans. Almost six million Americans served in uniform during the Korean War era, with over 1.5 Million serving in Korea or in the Theater of Operations. Many of those who served were World War II Veterans who left their families and the lives they were rebuilding to serve once again.

Almost 37,000 Americans died in Korea, 33,665 of them battle-related deaths. Over 8,000 of the dead remain either Missing in Action or were unidentified and U.S. wounded exceeded 103,000. There were over 140,000 Republic of Korea troops killed in action, with hundreds of thousands wounded. Tens of thousands of Korean troops are still missing. United Nations Allies suffered approximately 3,400 deaths with an estimated 11,900 wounded.

Most of those who survived returned quietly to rebuild the lives they had left, receiving little recognition for their service. Korea came to be known by many as "the forgotten war." Fifty years later, DoD sees it as its mission to thank and honor those who served, as well as their families.

For more information about the commemoration, planned national events, programs, products and suggested commemorative activities (including the commemorative community program), contact the international commemorations committee at DSN 664-0831 or Commercial (703) 604-0831. You can also visit the official website at <http://korea50.army.mil>.

Korean War by the Numbers

- The U.S. joined by 21 allies***
- Almost 6 Million Americans served in uniform***
- 1.5 Million served in Korea or in the Theater of Operations***
- Many soldiers were World War II Veterans***
- Almost 37,000 Americans died in Korea***
- Over 8,000 remain Missing in Action or unidentified***
- More than 103,000 Americans were wounded***
- More than 140,000 Republic of Korea troops were killed in action***
- United Nations Allies suffered approximately 3,400 deaths with an estimated 11,900 wounded.***

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